Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis

BISHOP'S CUSTOMARY

The regular pastoral visitation of all parishes and worshiping communities of the diocese is among the principal responsibilities of the bishop's ministry. It is also one of the great delights of the episcopal office.

It is desirable for the pastoral visitation to be at once both business as usual and a special occasion in the life of the parish. In a liturgical-sacramental church such as ours, these are not competing interests. The bishop's visitation ought not to be "unusual" no matter how infrequent. The central act of every visitation is the preaching of God's Word and the joint celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the clergy and people of the parish.

Confirmations, receptions, and reaffirmations may also take place during visitations and are not understood to be the principal reasons for the Bishop's Pastoral Visitation. The availability of persons for confirmation or reception need not play any part in the scheduling of the visitation. Opportunities to present candidates for rites of initiation will continue to be made available regionally.

SCHEDULING

The scheduling of visitations will be initiated by the Bishop's Office. As a general rule, a parish will not receive a second regular pastoral visitation until all other parishes have been visited.

Even with great care given to my visitation schedule, there will still be some need for flexibility. There will be parish emergencies, personal illness, travel delays, and a host of other things that may require last minute rescheduling. It is my commitment that such changes will be kept to a minimum, but from time to time they will occur. The calendar of visitations will be published on the diocesan website.

Please provide a draft bulletin of the liturgies of the day for my review at least a week in advance.w

THE DAY OF THE VISIT

I will make every effort to arrive no less than 30 minutes before the first service.

In general, it is my desire to maintain the Sunday morning schedule of the parish and attend the liturgies as commonly experienced. In some cases, it may be desired to merge the congregation together for one service and there is perhaps no better time than the Bishop's visitation. This

also means there is more time to be flexible with adult forums, meetings with youth and children, spending time with the Vestry, etc. If a worship time change for the visitation is desired that should be made known well in advance.

I am happy to meet with any configuration of parishioners during the education hour. We can have an open forum; I can do a presentation on a number of subjects; and I can also simply use the time to enjoy fellowship with members of the parish.

During my visitation it will be my desire to meet with the clergy, wardens and vestry following the final liturgy and coffee hour/reception. If distance, travel or scheduling issue prevents meeting on that day, special arrangements for meeting a weekday meeting before or after the visitation should be made with my office.

THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

I anticipate that all visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.

When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions, the liturgy on the day of the bishop's visitation should include the renewal of baptismal vows. This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services, even those that are otherwise Rite I.

The Proper of the Day will be used, even when initiation rites are to take place, and normally the liturgical color will be that of the day. Any departure from this should be discussed before the day of the visitation. For visitation during "ordinary time" that will include one or more of the rites of initiation, any of the following texts may be substituted for the second (epistle) reading: Romans 6:3-5 (6-11); Romans 8:14-17; Romans 12:1-8; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:7, 11-16. If these substitutions are made, please inform the Bishop's Office no less than one week before the visitation.

The Revised Common Lectionary (Episcopal Edition) is the norm in the Diocese of Indianapolis. If it seems appropriate to use other readings, please clear it with me well in advance of the visitation.

I am always pleased to sing as much of the liturgy as desired.

To emphasize my pastoral relationship, my preference is to wear the vestments of the parish. I will bring a plain cassock alb, mitre, and pastoral staff and will wear the chasuble for the entire liturgy. There may be exceptions when I will bring my own vestments—generally in the season of Eastertide, Pentecost Sunday or by prior arrangement.

Because liturgical spaces differ and to accommodate well trained liturgical ministers, I will generally preside from the place/chair from which it is normally done. I prefer to stand for confirmations and receptions, so if offered at a pastoral visitation, the bishop's chair need not be front and center except in unusual circumstances.

During the liturgy I would welcome the liturgical assistance of a deacon, senior acolyte or assisting lay minister. The details will vary, but will normally include such things as:

- holding the Prayer Book/presider's book so that my hands are free for liturgical gestures;
- holding the pastoral staff when we are not in procession;
- ensuring that my mitre is accessible or otherwise tending it during prayers, etc.
- assisting with chrism at baptisms;
- The Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge should make the necessary parish announcements. It may seem counter-intuitive but while it is always pleasant to be greeted, my preference is that you not use the language of "welcome." Such language tends to imply that I am a guest and not the chief pastor of our diocese.

It is important to remind the congregation that the undesignated offering goes to the bishop's discretionary fund for support of emergencies and non-budgeted ministries that arise in the course of the year.

I will offer the offertory sentence.

A FEW OTHER THINGS TO NOTE

It is my hope that these details answer the general questions you may have—if not please do be in touch. It is my desire that the visitation be a wonderful occasion in the life of the church.

As you may know, I enjoy taking selfies with members of the parish, clergy, etc. and highlighting the congregation using social media. It is my assumption that every parish has photo release forms on file for children. If you need forms please let my office know so that we can provide you a template.

Use of social media to communicate about the day is encouraged. Live tweeting sermons is also encouraged. My twitter handle is @JenniferBB. If the sermon will be audio and/or visually recorded please let me know in advance of the visitation.